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OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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TO THEIR HOLINESSES AND THEIR BEATITUDES THE PRIMATES OF THE HOLY ORTHODOX
CHURCHES THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITANS, ARCHBISHOPS, AND BISHOPS:

A SORROWFUL EPISTLE FROM

THE HUMBLE PHILARET, METROPOLITAN OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF
RUSSIA

The Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church have exhorted us to keep the Truth of Orthodoxy as the apple of our eye. And Our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching His Disciples to maintain every jot and title of the Divine Law intact said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 19). He sent His disciples to teach the doctrines He gave them to all nations in a pure and unadulterated form, and that duty then devolved upon each of us Bishops, as the successors to the Apostles. We are also taught to do this by the dogmatic definition of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which says: "We keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or by word of mouth." And the Holy Fathers of that Council added, in their first Canon: "The pattern for those who have received the sacerdotal dignity is found in the testimonies and instructions laid down in the canonical constitutions, which we receiving with a glad mind sing unto the Lord God in the words of the God-inspired David, saying: 'I have had as great delight in the way of Thy testimonies as in all manner of riches.' 'Thou hast commanded righteousness as Thy testimonies for ever.' 'Grant me understanding and I shall live.' Now if the word of prophecy bids us keep the testimonies of God forever and to live by them, it is evident that they must abide unshaken and without change."

Every one of us solemnly promises at his consecration to abide by our Faith and to obey the canons of the Holy Fathers, vowing before God to keep Orthodoxy inviolate from the temptations and errors which creep into the Church's life.

If a temptation appears in the fold of only one Orthodox Church, the remedy for it may be found in the same fold. But if a particular evil penetrates into all our Churches, it becomes a matter of concern for every single Bishop. Can any one of us be silent if he sees that many of his brethren simultaneously are walking along a path that leads them and their flock to a disastrous precipice through their unwitting loss of Orthodoxy?

Should we say in this case that humility commands us to keep silent? Should we regard it as indiscreet to lend advice to other descendants of the Holy Apostles, some of whom are occupying the most ancient and distinguished sees?

But Orthodoxy believes in the equality of all Bishops as regards grace, and distinguishes between them only as regards honor.

Should we be satisfied with the fact that every Church is responsible for itself? But what if the statements which trouble the faithful are made in the name of the whole Church, and therefore also involve our name, even though we have not authorized anybody to use it?

St. Gregory the Theologian once said that there are occasions "when even by silence truth can be betrayed." Should we not also be betraying the truth if, on noticing a deviation from pure Orthodoxy, we merely kept silence—always an easier and safer thing to do than speaking out?

We observe, however, that nobody in a higher position than our own is raising his voice; and this fact constrains us to speak out, lest at the Last Judgment we should be reproached for having seen the danger of Ecumenism threaten the Church, and yet not having warned her Bishops.

To be sure, we have already addressed His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras and His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America, expressing our grief and concern over their ecumenical activities, in which the birthright of the Church has been sold for a mess of pottage in the form of the world's applause. But the position taken by the Orthodox delegates at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala makes the concern of the zealots of Orthodoxy even more acute, and makes it necessary for us to communicate our sorrow and confusion to all our Brother Orthodox Bishops.

We may be asked why we write about that Assembly only now, nearly a year after the closing of its sessions. Our answer is that on this occasion we had no observers present, and obtained information about the Assembly only from the press, the accuracy of which is not always to be relied upon. Therefore we were awaiting the official reports; and having studied them, we find it imperative to address this letter to all the Orthodox Bishops whom the Lord has appointed to take care of His Church on earth.

The report on the Uppsala Assembly shocked us greatly, because from it we could see more clearly than ever how far the error of Ecumenism is winning the official approval of a number of our Churches.

When the first steps were taken in the organization of the Ecumenical Movement, many of the Orthodox Churches, following the initiative of the Patriarch of Constantinople, began to participate in its conferences. At the time such participation did not cause any worry even among the most zealous Orthodox. They thought that the Church would suffer no injury if her representatives appeared among various truth-seeking Protestants with the aim of presenting Orthodoxy in the face of their various errors. Such a participation in inter-faith conferences could be thought of as having a missionary character.

This position was still maintained to a certain extent, though not always consistently, at the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1954. There the Orthodox delegates openly stated that the decisions of the Assembly diverged so sharply from our teaching on the Church that they were unable in any way to join with the others in accepting them. Instead, they expressed the doctrine of the Orthodox Church in separate statements.

Those statements were so plain that, in fact, they should have issued in the logical conclusion that the Orthodox ought not to remain as members of the World Council of Churches on the same basis as others. The Protestants might well have asked them: "If you disagree with our basic principles, why are you with us?" We know that in private conversations some Protestants did use to say this, but the question was not raised in the plenary sessions. Thus the Orthodox remained as members of an organization the disparate origin of which they had just so clearly illustrated.

But what do we see now?

The Pan-Orthodox Conference in Geneva in June 1968 took a different course. It expressed "the general desire of the Orthodox Church to be an organic member of the World Council of Churches and its decision to contribute in all ways to its progress, theological and otherwise, to the promotion and good development of the whole of the work of the World Council of Churches." His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras informed the World Council of this decision in his special letter dated June 30, 1968. There were no reservations; no mention was made of any missionary aims, either in the one case or the other.

We must be very clear as to what sort of religious union it is of which the Orthodox Church has been declared "an organic member," and what the dogmatic implications of such a decision are.

In 1950, in Toronto, certain basic statements were accepted by the World Council of Churches which, while more cautious than the present statements, were already not in conformity with the Orthodox doctrine of the Church. On p. 4 it was then stated that "The member Churches of the World Council consider the relationship of other Churches to the Holy Catholic Church which the Creeds profess as a subject for mutual consideration." This statement is already unacceptable for us because the Church is spoken of not as actually existing in the world, but as some kind of abstract entity mentioned in various Creeds. However, even then, on p. 3, we read: "The member Churches recognize that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body" (Six Ecumenical Surveys, New York, 1954, p. 13). But since in the preceding point (No. 2) it was stated that "The member Churches of the World Council believe on the basis of the New Testament that the Church of Christ is one," there is either an implicit contradiction or else the profession of a new doctrine—viz., that no one can belong to the One Church without believing in her doctrines and without having liturgical unity with her.

The separate statements made in Evanston four years later on behalf of all the Orthodox delegates somewhat improved the situation, because they clearly showed that Orthodox Ecclesiology differs so much in essence from Protestant Ecclesiology that it is impossible to compose a joint statement. Now, however, the Orthodox participants in the World Council of Churches act differently; in an effort to unite truth with error, they have abandoned the principle expressed at Evanston. If all the Orthodox Churches are organic members of the World Council of Churches, then all the decisions of that Council are made in their name as well as in the name of the Protestants.

If initially the Orthodox participated in ecumenical meetings only to present the truth, performing, so to speak, a missionary service among confessions foreign to Orthodoxy, then now they have combined with them, and anyone can say that what was said at Uppsala was also said by the member Orthodox Churches in the person of their delegates. Alas that it should be said in the name of the whole Orthodox Church!

We regard it as our duty to protest in the strongest possible terms against this state of affairs. We know that in this protest we have with us all the Holy Fathers of the Church. Also with us are not only the hierarchy, clergy, and laymen of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, but those members of other Orthodox Churches who agree with us as well.

We take the liberty of saying that it seems our Brother Bishops have treated this matter without sufficient attention, without realizing how far our Church is being drawn into the sphere of anti-canonical and even of anti-dogmatical agreements with the heterodox. This fact is especially clear if one turns to the initial statements of the representatives of the Orthodox Churches as compared with what is taking place at present.

At the Conference in Lausanne in 1937, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Metropolitan Germanos, clearly stated that restoring unity with the Church means for Protestants that they must return to the doctrines of the ancient Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. "And what are the elements of the Christian doctrines," he said, "which should be regarded as necessary and essential? According to the understanding of the Orthodox Church there is no need now to make definitions of those necessary elements of faith, because they are already made in the ancient Creeds and the decisions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Therefore this teaching of the ancient undivided Church should be the basis of the reunion of the Church." That was the position taken by all the Orthodox delegates at the Lausanne and Oxford Conferences.

As for our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, her views were expressed with particular clarity upon the appointment of a representative to the Committee for Continuation of the Conference on Faith and Order on December 18/31, 1931. That decision was as follows:

"Maintaining the belief in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the Synod of Bishops professes that the Church has never been divided. The question is only who belongs to her and who does not. At the same time the Synod warmly greets the efforts of heterodox confessions to study Christ's teaching on the Church with the hope that by such study, especially with the participation of the representatives of the Holy Orthodox Church, they may at last come to the conviction that the Orthodox Church, being the pillar and the ground of the truth (I Tim. iii. 15), fully and with no faults has maintained the doctrine given by Christ the Savior to His disciples. With that Faith and with such hope the Synod of Bishops accepts the invitation of the Committee for Continuation of the Conference on Faith and Order."

Here everything is clear and nothing is left unsaid. This statement is essentially in agreement with what also used to be said at that time by official representatives of other Orthodox Churches.

What, then, has changed? Have the Protestants abandoned their errors? No. They have not changed, and the Church has not changed; only the persons who are now said to represent her have changed.

If the representatives of the Orthodox Churches had only continued firmly maintaining the basic principles of our belief in the Church, they would not have brought the Orthodox Church into the ambiguous position which was created for her by the decision of the Geneva Conference last year.

Since the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, the Orthodox delegates no longer make separate statements, but have merged into one mass with the Protestant confessions. Thus all the decisions of the Uppsala Assembly are made in the name of "the Church," which is always spoken of in the singular.

Who is speaking? Who gave these people the right to make ecclesiological statements not merely on their own behalf, but also on behalf of the Orthodox Church?

We ask you, Most Reverend Brothers, to check the list of the Churches participating in the Ecumenical Movement and in the World Council of Churches. Take, for instance, at least the first lines of the list on page 444 of The Uppsala 68 Report.

There you will find the following names: Evangelical Church of the River Plata, Methodist Church of Australia, Churches of Christ in Australia, The Church of England of Australia, Congregational Union of Australia, Presbyterian Church of Australia

Is it necessary to continue the list? Is it not clear that beginning with the very first lines, confessions are included which differ greatly from Orthodoxy, which deny sacraments, hierarchy, Church tradition, holy canons, which do not venerate the Mother of God and the Saints, etc.? We should have to enumerate nearly all of our dogmas in order to point out what in our Orthodox doctrines is not accepted by the majority of the members of the World Council of Churches—of which, however, the Orthodox Church is now nevertheless alleged to be an organic member.

Yet in the name of this union of the various representatives of all possible heresies, the Uppsala Assembly constantly states: "The Church professes," "The Church teaches," "The Church does this and that"

Out of this mixture of errors, which have gone so far astray from Tradition, the published decision on "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church" makes the statement: "The Holy Spirit has not only preserved the Church in continuity with the past; He is also continuously present in the Church, effecting her inward renewal and re-creation."

The question is: Where is the "continuity with the past" among the Presbyterians? Where is the presence of the Holy Spirit among those who do not recognize any mysteries? How can one speak of the catholicity of those who do not accept the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils?

If these doctrinal decisions were preceded by words indicating that one part of the Churches observes one doctrine, and the other a different doctrine, and the teaching of the Orthodox Church were stated separately, that would be consistent with reality. But such is not the case, and in the name of various confessions they say: "The Church teaches.... "

This in itself is a proclamation of the Protestant doctrine of the Church as comprising all those who call themselves Christians, even if they have no intercommunion. But without accepting that doctrine, it is impossible to be an organic member of the World Council of Churches, because that doctrine is the basis of the whole ideology on which this organization rests.

True, the resolution "On the Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church" is followed by a note in fine print which says that since this resolution provoked such a great diversity of views, this decision is not final but only a summary of the matters considered in the Section. However, there are not such remarks regarding other similar resolutions. The minutes contain no evidence that the Orthodox delegates made any statements to the effect that the Assembly might not speak in the name of the Church in the singular; and the Assembly does so everywhere, in all its resolutions, which never have such qualifying remarks attached.

On the contrary, His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, in his reply to the greeting of the Swedish Archbishop, said in the name of the Assembly, "As you well know, the Church universal is called by a demanding world to give ample evidence of its faith" (The Uppsala 69 Report, p.103).

Of what "Church universal" did Archbishop Iakovos speak? Of the Orthodox Church? No. He spoke here of the "Church" uniting all confessions, of the Church of the World Council of Churches.

A tendency to speak in this fashion is especially conspicuous in the report of the Committee on Faith and Order. In the resolution upon its report, following statements about the success of Ecumenism, it says: "We are in agreement with the decision of the Faith and Order Commission at its Bristol meeting to pursue its study program of the unity of the Church in the wider context of the study of the unity of mankind and of creation. We welcome at the same time the statement of the Faith and Order Commission that its task remains 'to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ' and to keep before the Council and the churches 'the obligation to

manifest that unity for the sake of their Lord and for the better accomplishment of his mission in the world" (ibid., p. 223).

The implication is clear in all these resolutions that, notwithstanding the outward separation of the Churches, their internal unity still exists. The aim of Ecumenism is in this world to make this inner unity also an outward one through various manifestations of such aspirations.

In order to evaluate all this from the point of view of the Orthodox Church, it is sufficient to imagine the reception it would find among the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils. Can anybody imagine the Orthodox Church of that period declaring itself an organic member of a society uniting Eunomians or Anomoeans, Arians, Semi-Arians, Sabellians, and Apollinarians?

Certainly not! On the contrary, Canon I of the Second Ecumenical Council does not call for union with such groups, but anathematizes them. Subsequent Ecumenical Councils did the same in regard to other heresies.

The organic membership of Orthodox Christians in one body with modern heretics will not sanctify the latter, but does alienate those Orthodox from the catholic Orthodox unity. That unity is not limited to the modern age. Catholicity embraces all the generations of the Holy Fathers. St. Vincent of Lerins, in his immortal work, writes that "for Christians to declare something which they did not previously accept has never been permitted, is never permitted, and never will be permitted,—but to anathematize those who proclaim something outside of that which was accepted once and for ever, has always been a duty, is always a duty, and always will be a duty."

Perhaps somebody will say that times have changed, and heresies now are not so malicious and destructive as in the days of the Ecumenical Councils. But are those Protestants who renounce the veneration of the Theotokos and the Saints, who do not recognize the grace of the hierarchy,—or the Roman Catholics, who have invented new errors,—are they nearer to the Orthodox Church than the Arians or Semi-Arians?

Let us grant that modern preachers of heresy are not so belligerent towards the Orthodox Church as the ancient ones were. However, that is not because their doctrines are nearer to Orthodox teaching, but because Protestantism and Ecumenism have built up in them the conviction that there is no One and True Church on earth, but only communities of men who are in varying degrees of error. Such a doctrine kills any zeal in professing what they take to be the truth, and therefore modern heretics appear to be less obdurate than the ancient ones. But such indifference to truth is in many respects worse than the capacity to be zealous in defense of an error mistaken for truth. Pilate, who said "What is truth?" could not be converted; but Saul, the persecutor of Christianity, became the Apostle Paul. That is why we read in the Book of Revelation the menacing words to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (iii. 15-16).

Ecumenism makes the World Council of Churches a society in which every member, with Laodicean indifference, recognizes himself and others as being in error, and is concerned only about finding phrases which will express that error in terms acceptable to all. Is there any room here as an "organic member" for the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which has always professed itself to be holy and without blemish because its Head is Christ Himself (Eph. v. 27)?

The LVII (LXVI in the Athens Syntagma) Canon of Carthage says of the Church that she is "the one spoken of as a dove (Song of Songs, vi.9) and sole mother of Christians, in whom all the sanctifying gifts, savingly everlasting and vital are received—which, however, inflict upon those persisting in heresy the great punishment of damnation."

We also feel it is our duty to declare that it is impossible to recognize the Russian Church as legally and duly represented at the Pan-Orthodox Conferences called by His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras. Those Bishops who participate in these Conferences in the name of the Russian Church with Metropolitan Nikodim at their head, do not represent the authentic Russian Church. They represent only those Bishops who by the will of an atheistic Government bear the titles of certain Dioceses of the Church of Russia. We have already had occasion to write about this matter to His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras. These persons participate in meetings abroad only in so far as such participation is profitable to their civil authorities, the most cruel in the history of the world. Nero's ferocity and Julian the Apostate's hatred of Christianity are pallid in comparison.

Is it not to the influence of that Government that we must largely ascribe the political resolutions of the Uppsala Assembly, which repeat many slogans widely observable in Communist propaganda in the West?

In the concluding speech of the Chairman, Dr. Payne, it was said that "the Church of Jesus Christ must show actively the compassion of Christ in a needy world." But neither he nor anybody else said a word about the millions of Christians martyred in the U.S.S.R.; nobody spoke a word of compassion about their plight.

It is good to express compassion for the hungry in Biefra, for those who constantly suffer from fighting in the Middle East or in Vietnam; but does that cover all the human afflictions of the present time? Can it be that the members of the World Council of Churches know nothing about the persecutions of Religion in the U.S.S.R.? Do they not know what iniquity is reigning there? Do they not know that martyrs for the Faith there are counted in the millions, that the Holy Scriptures are not published there and that people are sentenced to banishment with hard labor for distributing them? Do they not know that children there are prevented from lessons in the basic principles of Religion, and even from attending religious services? Do they not know of the thousands who have been banished for their Faith, about the children wrested from their parents to prevent them from receiving religious upbringing?

All this is certainly well known to anybody who reads the newspapers, but it is never mentioned in any resolution of the World Council of Churches. The ecumenical priests and Levites are passing by in silence and without interest, without so much as a glance in the direction of the Christians persecuted in the U.S.S.R. They are silent because the official representatives of the Church of Russia, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, deny the existence of these persecutions in order to please their civil authorities.

These people are not free. Whether they wish to or not, they are forced to speak in obedience to orders from Communist Moscow. The burden of persecution makes them more deserving of compassion than of blame. But being moral prisoners of the godless, they cannot be true spokesmen for the Russian Orthodox Church, suffering, deprived of any rights, forced to be silent, driven into catacombs and prisons.

The late Patriarch Sergius and the present Patriarch Alexis were elected in violation of the rules which were instituted by the All-Russian Church Council of 1917 at the restoration of the Patriarchate. Both were chosen according to the instructions of Stalin, the fiercest persecutor of the Church in history.

Can you imagine a Bishop of Rome chosen according to the instructions of Nero? But Stalin was many times worse.

The hierarchs selected by Stalin had to promise their obedience to an atheistic Government whose aim, according to the Communist program, is the annihilation of Religion. The present Patriarch Alexis wrote to Stalin immediately after the death of his predecessor that he would observe fidelity to his Government: "Acting fully in concert with the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and also with the Holy Synod instituted by the late Patriarch, I will be secure from mistakes and wrong actions."

Everybody knows that "mistakes and wrong actions" in the language of the Moscow masters means any violation of the instructions given by the Communist authorities.

We can pity an unfortunate old man, but we cannot recognize him as the Head of the Russian Church, of which we regard ourselves an inseparable part. Both to Patriarch Alexis and his collaborators the sanctions of the XXX Apostolic Canon and Canon III of the Seventh Ecumenical Council can be doubly applied: "If any bishop, making use of the secular powers, shall by their means obtain jurisdiction over any church, he shall be deposed, and also excommunicated, together with all who remain in communion with him."

Bishop Nikodim of Dalmatia, in his commentary on the XXX Apostolic Canon, says: "If the Church condemned the unlawful influence of civil authorities on the appointment of a bishop at a time when the Rulers were Christians, how much the more so, consequently, she had to condemn it when they were heathens." What is there to say, therefore, when a Patriarch and Bishops are installed by the open and militant enemies of their religion?

When one part of the Russian Episcopate, together with the late Patriarch (at that time Metropolitan) Sergius, took the course of agreeing with the enemies of the Church in 1927, a large (and the most respected) part of that Episcopate, with Metropolitan Joseph of Leningrad and the first candidate of Patriarch Tikhon for the office of locum tenens, Metropolitan Cyrill of Kazan, did not agree to go along with him, preferring banishment and martyrdom. Metropolitan Joseph by that time had already come to the conclusion that, in the face of a Government which openly had as its goal the destruction of Religion by the use of any available means, the legal existence of a Church Administration becomes practically impossible without entailing compromises

which are too great and too sinful. He therefore started secret ordinations of Bishops and priests, in that way organizing the Catacomb Church which still exists in hiding.

The atheists seldom mention the Catacomb Church, being afraid of giving her too much publicity. Only very rarely in the Soviet Press is the news of some trial of her members mentioned. Information about her, however, is given in manuals for anti-religious workers in the U.S.S.R. For instance, the basic information about this Church, under the name of "The Truly Orthodox Church," is given in a manual with the title of Slovar Ateista ("The Atheist's Dictionary"), published in Moscow in 1964.

With no open churches, in secret meetings similar to the catacomb meetings of the early Christians, these confessors of the Faith perform their services unseen by the outer world. They are the true representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose greatness will become known to the world only after the downfall of the Communist power.

For these reasons, although representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate participated in the decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Conference in Geneva last year, and particularly in regard to making the Orthodox Church an organic member of the World Council of Churches,—we look upon that decision as having been accepted without the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church. That Church is forced to stay silent, and we, as her free representatives, are grieved by the fact that such a decision was accepted. We categorically protest that decision as being contrary to the very nature itself of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

The poison of heresy is not too dangerous when it is preached only from outside the Church. Many times more perilous is that poison which is gradually introduced into the organism in larger and larger doses by those who, in virtue of their position, should not be poisoners but spiritual physicians.

Can it be that the Orthodox Episcopate will remain indifferent to that danger? Will it not be too late to protect our spiritual flock when the wolves are devouring the sheep before their pastors' eyes, inside the very sheepfold itself?

Do we not see the divine sword already raised (Matt. x. 34), separating those who are true to the traditional faith of the Holy Church from those who, in the words of His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras in his greeting to the Uppsala Assembly, are working to shape the "new drive in the ecumenical movement" for the "fulfillment of the general Christian renewal" on the paths of reformation and indifference to the truth?

It seems that we have shown clearly enough that this apparent unity is not unity in the truth of Orthodoxy, but a unity that mixes white with black, good with evil, and truth with error.

We have already protested against the unorthodox ecumenical actions of His Holiness Patriarch Athenagoras and Archbishop Iakovos in letters which were widely distributed to Bishops of the Orthodox Church in various countries. We have received from different parts of the world expressions of agreement with us.

But now the time has come to make our protest heard more loudly still, and then even yet more loudly, so as to stop the action of this poison before it has become as potent as the ancient heresies of Arianism, Nestorianism, or Eutychianism, which in their time so shook the whole body of the Church as to make it seem that heresy was apt to overcome Orthodoxy.

We direct our appeal to all the Bishops of the Orthodox Church, imploring them to study the subject of this letter and to rise up in defense of the purity of the Orthodox Faith. We also ask them very much to pray for the Russian Orthodox Church, so greatly suffering from the atheists, that the Lord might shorten the days of her trial and send her freedom and peace.

Metropolitan PHILARET

In New York,
Sunday of the Sixth Ecumenical Council,
14/27 July, 1969

A SECOND SORROWFUL EPISTLE
TO THEIR HOLINESSES AND THEIR BEATITUDES,

THE PRIMATES OF THE HOLY ORTHODOX CHURCHES,
THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITANS, ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS.

The People of the Lord residing in his Diocese are entrusted to the Bishop, and he will be required to give account of their souls according to the 39th Apostolic Canon. The 34th Apostolic Canon orders that a Bishop may do "those things only which concern his own Diocese and the territories belonging to it."

There are, however, occasions when events are of such a nature that their influence extends beyond the limits of one Diocese, or indeed those of one or more of the local Churches. Events of such a general, global nature can not be ignored by any Orthodox Bishop, who, as a successor of the Apostles, is charged with the protection of his flock from various temptations. The lightening-like speed with which ideas may be spread in our times make such care all the more imperative now.

In particular, our flock, belonging to the free part of the Church of Russia, is spread out all over the world. What has just been stated, therefore, is most pertinent to it.

As a result of this, our Bishops, when meeting in their Councils, cannot confine their discussions to the narrow limits of pastoral and administrative problems arising in their respective Dioceses, but must in addition turn their attention to matters of a general importance to the whole Orthodox World, since the affliction of one Church is as "an affliction unto them all, eliciting the compassion of them all" (Phil. 4:14-16; Heb. 10:30). And if the Apostle St. Paul was weak with those who were weak and burning with those who were offended, how then can we Bishops of God remain indifferent to the growth of errors which threaten the salvation of the souls of many of our brothers in Christ?

It is in the spirit of such a feeling that we have already once addressed all the Bishops of the Holy Orthodox Church with a Sorrowful Epistle. We rejoiced to learn that, in harmony with our appeal, several Metropolitans of the Church of Greece have recently made reports to their Synod calling to its attention the necessity of considering ecumenism a heresy and the advisability of reconsidering the matter of participation in the World Council of Churches. Such healthy reactions against the spreading of ecumenism allow us to hope that the Church of Christ will be spared this new storm which threatens her.

Yet, two years have passed since our Sorrowful Epistle was issued, and, alas! although in the Church of Greece we have seen the new statements regarding ecumenism as un-Orthodox, no Orthodox Church has announced its withdrawal from the World Council of Churches.

In the Sorrowful Epistle, we depicted in vivid colors to what extent the organic membership of the Orthodox Church in that Council, based as it is upon purely Protestant principles, is contrary to the very basis of Orthodoxy. In this Epistle, having been authorized by our Council of Bishops, we would further develop and extend our warning, showing that the participants in the ecumenical movement are involved in a profound heresy against the very foundation of the Church.

The essence of that movement has been given a clear definition by the statement of the Roman Catholic theologian Ives M. J. Congar. He writes that "this is a movement which prompts the Christian Churches to wish the restoration of the lost unity, and to that end to have a deep understanding of itself and understanding of each other." He continues, "It is composed of all the feelings, ideas, actions or institutions, meetings or conferences, ceremonies, manifestations and publications which are directed to prepare the reunion in new unity not only of (separate) Christians, but also of the actually existing Churches." Actually, he continues, "the word ecumenism, which is of Protestant origin, means now a concrete reality: the totality of all the aforementioned upon the basis of a certain attitude and a certain amount of very definite conviction (although not always very clear and certain). It is not a desire or an attempt to unite those who are regarded as separated into one Church which would be regarded as the only true one. It begins at just that point where it is recognized that, at the present state, none of the Christian confessions possesses the fullness of Christianity, but even if one of them is authentic, still, as a confession, it does not contain the whole truth. There are Christian values outside of it belonging not only to Christians who are separated from it in creed, but also to other Churches and other confessions as such" (Chretiens Desunis, Ed. Unam Sanctam, Paris, 1937, pp. XI-XII). This definition of the ecumenical movement made by a Roman Catholic theologian 35 years ago continues to be quite as exact even now, with the difference that during the intervening years this movement has continued to develop further with a newer and more dangerous scope.

In our first Sorrowful Epistle, we wrote in detail on how incompatible with our Ecclesiology was the participation of Orthodox in the World Council of Churches, and presented precisely the nature of the violation

against Orthodoxy committed in the participation of our Churches in that council. We demonstrated that the basic principles of that council are incompatible with the Orthodox doctrine of the Church. We, therefore, protested against the acceptance of that resolution at the Geneva Pan-Orthodox Conference whereby the Orthodox Church was proclaimed an organic member of the World Council of Churches.

Alas! These last few years are richly laden with evidence that, in their dialogues with the heterodox, some Orthodox representatives have adopted a purely Protestant ecclesiology which brings in its wake a Protestant approach to questions of the life of the Church, and from which springs forth the now-popular modernism.

Modernism consists in that bringing-down, that re-aligning of the life of the Church according to the principles of current life and human weaknesses. We saw it in the Renovation Movement and in the Living Church in Russia in the twenties. At the first meeting of the founders of the Living Church on May 29, 1922, its aims were determined as a "revision and change of all facets of Church life which are required by the demands of current life" (The New Church, Prof. B. V. Titlinov, Petrograd-Moscow, 1923, p. 11). The Living Church was an attempt at a reformation adjusted to the requirements of the conditions of a communist state. Modernism places that compliance with the weaknesses of human nature above the moral and even doctrinal requirements of the Church. In that measure that the world is abandoning Christian principles, modernism debases the level of religious life more and more. Within the Western confessions we see that there has come about an abolition of fasting, a radical shortening and vulgarization of religious services, and, finally, full spiritual devastation, even to the point of exhibiting an indulgent and permissive attitude toward unnatural vices of which St. Paul said it was shameful even to speak.

It was just modernism which was the basis of the Pan-Orthodox Conference of sad memory in Constantinople in 1923, evidently not without some influence of the renovation experiment in Russia. Subsequent to that conference, some Churches, while not adopting all the reforms which were there introduced, adopted the Western calendar, and even, in some cases, the Western Paschalia. This, then, was the first step onto the path of modernism of the Orthodox Church, whereby Her way of life was changed in order to bring it closer to the way of life of heretical communities. In this respect, therefore, the adoption of the Western Calendar was a violation of a principle consistent in the Holy Canons, whereby there is a tendency to spiritually isolate the Faithful from those who teach contrary to the Orthodox Church, and not to encourage closeness with such in our prayer-life (Titus 3:10; 10th, 45th, and 65th Apostolic Canons; 32nd, 33rd, and 37th Canons of Laodicea, etc.). The unhappy fruit of that reform was the violation of the unity of the life in prayer of Orthodox Christians in various countries. While some of them were celebrating Christmas together with heretics, others still fasted. Sometimes such a division occurred in the same local Church, and sometimes Easter [Pascha] was celebrated according to the Western Paschal reckoning. For the sake, therefore, of being nearer to the heretics, that principle, set forth by the First Ecumenical Council that all Orthodox Christians should simultaneously, with one mouth and one heart, rejoice and glorify the Resurrection of Christ all over the world, is violated.

This tendency to introduce reforms, regardless of previous general decisions and practice of the whole Church in violation of the Second Canon of the VI Ecumenical Council, creates only confusion. His Holiness, the Patriarch of Serbia, Gabriel, of blessed memory, expressed this feeling eloquently at the Church Conference held in Moscow in 1948.

"In the last decades," he said, "various tendencies have appeared in the Orthodox Church which evoke reasonable apprehension for the purity of Her doctrines and for Her dogmatical and canonical Unity.

"The convening by the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Pan-Orthodox Conference and the Conference at Vatopedi, which had as their principal aim the preparing of the Prosynod, violated the unity and cooperation of the Orthodox Churches. On the one hand, the absence of the Church of Russia at these meetings, and, on the other, the hasty and unilateral actions of some of the local Churches and the hasty actions of their representatives have introduced chaos and anomalies into the life of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

"The unilateral introduction of the Gregorian Calendar by some of the local Churches while the Old Calendar was kept yet by others, shook the unity of the Church and incited serious dissension within those of them who so lightly introduced the New Calendar" (Acts of the Conferences of the Heads and Representatives of the Autocephalic Orthodox Churches, Moscow, 1949, Vol. II, pp. 447-448).

Recently, Prof. Theodorou, one of the representatives of the Church of Greece at the Conference in Chambesey in 1968, noted that the calendar reform in Greece was hasty and noted further that the Church there suffers even now from the schism it caused (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1969, No. 1, p. 51).

It could not escape the sensitive consciences of many sons of the Church that within the calendar reform, the foundation is already laid for a revision of the entire order of Orthodox Church life which has been blessed by the Tradition of many centuries and confirmed by the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. Already at that Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1923 at Constantinople, the questions of the second marriage of clergy as well as other matters were raised. And recently, the Greek Archbishop of North and South America, Iakovos, made a statement in favor of a married episcopate (The Hellenic Chronicle, December 23, 1971).

The strength of Orthodoxy has always lain in Her maintaining the principles of Church Tradition. Despite this, there are those who are attempting to include in the agenda of a future Great Council not a discussion of the best ways to safeguard those principles, but, on the contrary, ways to bring about a radical revision of the entire way of life in the Church, beginning with the abolition of fasts, second marriages of the clergy, etc., so that Her way of life would be closer to that of the heretical communities.

In our first Sorrowful Epistle we have shown in detail the extent to which the principles of the World Council of Churches are contrary to the doctrines of the Orthodox Church, and we protested against the decision taken in Geneva at the Pan-Orthodox Conference declaring the Orthodox Church to be an organic member of that council. Then we reminded all that, "the poison of heresy is not too dangerous when it is preached outside the Church. Many times more perilous is that poison which is gradually introduced into the organism in larger and larger doses by those who, in virtue of their position, should not be poisoners but spiritual physicians."

Alas! Of late we see the symptoms of such a great development of ecumenism with the participation of the Orthodox, that it has become a serious threat, leading to the utter annihilation of the Orthodox Church by dissolving Her in an ocean of heretical communities.

The problem of unity is not discussed now on the level at which it used to be considered by the Holy Fathers. For them unity with the heretics required them to accept the whole of Orthodox doctrine and their return to the fold of the Orthodox Church. Under the prism of the ecumenical movement, however, it is understood that both sides are equally right and wrong; this is applicable to both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Patriarch Athenagoras clearly expressed this in his speech greeting Cardinal Willebrands in Constantinople on November 30, 1969. The Patriarch expressed the wish that the Cardinal's activities would "mark a new epoch of progress not only in regard to the two of our Churches, but also of all Christians." The Patriarch gave the definition of the new approach to the problem of unity by saying that, "None of us is calling the other to himself, but, like Peter and Andrew, we both direct ourselves to Jesus, the only and mutual Lord, Who unites us into oneness" (Tomos Agapis, Rome-Istanbul, Document No. 274, pp. 588-589).

The recent exchange of letters between Paul VI, the Pope of Rome, and the Patriarch Athenagoras further elaborates and develops this unorthodox idea to our great vexation. Encouraged by various statements of the Primate of the Church of Constantinople, the Pope wrote to him on February 8, 1971: "We remind the believers assembled in the Basilica of St. Peter on the Week of Unity that between our Church and the venerable Orthodox Churches there is an already existing, nearly complete communion, though not fully complete, resulting from our common participation in the mystery of Christ and His Church" (Tomos Agapis, pp.614-615).

A doctrine, new for Roman Catholicism but of long-standing acceptance for Protestantism, is contained in these words. According to it, the separations existing between Christians on earth is actually illusory—they do not reach the heavens. So it is that the words of our Savior regarding the chastisement of those who disobey the Church (Matt. 18:18) are set at naught and regarded as without validity. Such a doctrine is novel not only for us Orthodox, but for the Roman Catholics as well, whose thought on this matter, so different from that of the present, was expressed in 1928 in Pope Pius IX's Encyclical *Mortalium Animos*. Though the Roman Catholics are of those "without" (I Cor. 5:13), and we are not directly concerned with changing trends in their views, their advance nearer to Protestant ecclesiology interests us only insofar as it coincides with the simultaneous acceptance of similar attitudes by Constantinople. Ecumenists of Orthodox background and ecumenists of Protestant-Roman Catholic background arrive at a unanimity of opinion in the same heresy.

Patriarch Athenagoras answered the above quoted letter of the Pope on March 21, 1971, in a similar spirit. When quoting his words, we will italicize the most important phrases. While the Pope, who is not interested in dogmatical harmony, invites the Patriarch "to do all that is possible to speed that much desired day when, at the conclusion of a common concelebration, we will be made worthy to communicate together of the same Cup of the Lord" (ibid.); the Patriarch answered in the same spirit addressing the Pope as "elder brother" and saying that, " . . . following the holy desire of the Lord Who would that His Church be One, visible to the entire world, so that the entire world would fit in Her, we constantly and unremittently surrender ourselves to the guidance of

the Holy Spirit unto the firm continuation and completion of the now-begun and developing holy work begun with You in our common Holy desire, to make visible and manifest unto the world the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ" (ibid., pp. 618-619).

Further on the Patriarch writes: "Truly, even though the Church of both east and west have been estranged from each other for offenses known but to the Lord, they are not virtually separated from the communion in the mystery of the God-man Jesus and His Divine-human Church" (ibid., pp. 620).

The Patriarch bitterly mentions that "we were estranged from reciprocal love and the blessed gift of confession in oneness of mind of the faith of Christ was taken from us." He says that, "we were deprived of the blessing of going up together to the one altar and of the full and together communion of the same eucharistic honorable Body and Blood, even though we did not cease to recognize each in the other the validity of apostolic priesthood and the validity of the mystery of the Divine Eucharist" (ibid.). It is at this point in time, however, that the Patriarch notes that, "we are called positively to proceed to the final union in concelebration and communion of the honorable Blood of Christ from the same holy cup" (ibid., pp. 620-623).

In this letter many un-Orthodox ideas are expressed, which, if taken to their logical end, lead us to the most disastrous conclusions. It follows from the quoted words that the ecumenists led by Patriarch Athenagoras do not believe in the Church as She was founded by the Savior. Contrary to His word (Matt. 16:18), that Church no longer exists for them, and the Pope and Patriarch together would "make visible and manifest" a new church which would encompass the whole of mankind. Is it not dreadful to hear these words "make visible and manifest" from the mouth of an Orthodox Patriarch? Is it not a renunciation of the existing Church of Christ? Is it possible to render a new church visible without first renouncing that very Church which was created by the Lord? But for those who belong to Her and who believe in Her, there is no need to make visible and manifest any new Church. Yet even the "old" Church of the Holy Apostles and Fathers is presented by the Pope and the Patriarch in a distorted manner so as to create the illusion in the mind of the reader that She is somehow connected with the new church that they wish to create. To that end they attempt to present the separation between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism as if it never existed.

In their common prayer in the Basilica of St. Peter, Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI stated that they find themselves already united "in the proclamation of the same Gospel, in the same baptism, in the same sacraments and the charismas" (ibid., p.660).

But even if the Pope and Patriarch have declared to be null and void the Anathemas which have existed for nine centuries, does this mean that the reasons for pronouncing them, which are known to all, have ceased to exist? Does this mean that the errors of the Latins which one was required to renounce upon entering the Church no longer exist?

The Roman Catholic Church with which Patriarch Athenagoras would establish liturgical communion, and with which, through the actions of Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and others, the Moscow Patriarchate has already entered into communion, is not even that same church with which the Orthodox Church led by St. Mark of Ephesus refused to enter into a union. That church is even further away from Orthodoxy now, having introduced even more new doctrines and having accepted more and more the principles of reformation, ecumenism and modernism.

In a number of decisions of the Orthodox Church the Roman Catholics were regarded as heretics. Though from time to time they were accepted into the Church in a manner such as that applied to Arians, it is to be noted that for many centuries and even in our time the Greek Churches accepted them by Baptism. If after the centuries following 1054 the Latins were accepted into the Greek and Russian Churches by two rites, that of Baptism or of Chrismation, it was because although everyone recognized them to be heretics, a general rule for the entire Church was not yet established in regard to the means of their acceptance. For instance, when in the beginning of the XII century the Serbian Prince and father of Stephan Nemanian was forced into having his son baptized by the Latins upon his subsequent return later to Rasa he baptized him in the Orthodox Church (Short Outline of the Orthodox Churches, Bulgarian, Serbian and Rumanian, E. E. Golubinsky, Moscow, 1871, p. 551). In another monumental work, The History of the Russian Church (Vols. I/II, Moscow, 1904, pp. 806-807), Professor Golubinsky, in describing the stand taken by the Russian Church in regard to the Latins, advances many facts indicating that in applying various ways in receiving the Latins into the fold of the Orthodox Church, at some times baptizing them and at others chrismating them, both the Greeks and Russian Churches assumed that they were heretics.

Therefore, the statement that during those centuries "we did not cease to recognize each in the other the validity of apostolic priesthood and the validity of the mystery of the Divine Eucharist" is absolutely inconsistent with historical fact. The separation between us and Rome existed and exists; further, it is not illusory but actual. The separation appears illusory to those who give no weight to the words of the Savior spoken to His Holy Apostles and through them, to their successors: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18).

The Savior says, "Verily I say unto you," and the Patriarch contradicts Him and declares His words to be untrue. It must be concluded from the Patriarch's words that, although the Latins were regarded as heretics by the whole Orthodox Church, although they could not receive Holy Communion, even though they were accepted into the Church over many centuries by Baptism—and we know of no decision in the East reversing this stand—still, they continued to be members of the Corpus Christi and were not separated from the Sacraments of the Church. In such a statement there is no logic. It evidences a loss of contact with the actual history of the Church. It presents us with an example of application in practice of the Protestant doctrine according to which excommunication from the Church because of dogmatical error does not bar the one excommunicated from membership in Her. In other words, it means that "communion in the mystery of the God-man Jesus" does not necessarily depend upon membership in the Orthodox Church.

In an attempt to find some justification for their ecumenical theory, they are trying to convince us that membership in the Church without full dogmatic agreement with Her was permitted in the past. In his official statement at the Phanar, made when his letter to the Pope was published, Patriarch Athenagoras tried to convince us that notwithstanding the facts mentioned earlier, the Eastern Church did not rupture its communion with Rome, even when dogmatical dissent was obvious.

One can indeed find some solitary instances of communion. In some places even after 1054, some Eastern hierarchs may not have hastened to brand as heresy various wrong doctrines that appeared in the Church of Rome.

But a long ailment before death is still a disease, and the death it causes remains a death, however long it took for it to come to pass. In the case of Rome that process was already evident at the time of St. Photios, but only later, in 1054, did it become a final separation.

The exchange of letters between the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope of Rome have made it necessary for us to dwell to no little extent upon the relationship of the Orthodox Church toward the Latins. But Patriarch Athenagoras goes yet beyond equating Papism with Orthodoxy. We speak here of his statement to Roge Schutz, a pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Switzerland. "I wish to make you an avowal," he said. "You are a priest. I could receive from your hands the Body and Blood of Christ." On the next day he added, "I could make my confession to you" (Le Monde, May 21, 1970).

Ecumenists of Orthodox background are willing to undermine even the authority of the Ecumenical Councils in order to achieve communion with heretics. This happened during the dialogue with the Monophysites. At the meeting with them in Geneva, a clear Orthodox position was held actually only by one or two of the participants, while the rest manifested the typical ecumenistic tendency to accomplish intercommunion at any cost, even without the attainment of a full dogmatic agreement between the Orthodox and Monophysites. Rev. Dr. John Romanides, the representative of the Church of Greece, was fully justified in stating the following of the Orthodox members at the conference: "We have all along been the object of an ecumenical technique which aims at the accomplishment of intercommunion or communion without an agreement on Chalcedon and the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Ecumenical Councils (Minutes of the Conference in Geneva, The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Vol. XVI, p. 30). As a result of such tactics, one of the resolutions of this conference is actually an agreement to investigate the possibility of drawing up a formula of Concord which would not be a dogmatical statement on the level of a confession of faith, but would rather serve as a basis upon which the Orthodox and the Monophysites could proceed toward union in a common Eucharist (ibid., p. 6).

Despite the categorical statements on the part of the Monophysites that on no account would they accept Chalcedon and the rest of the Ecumenical Councils, the Orthodox delegation signed a resolution recognizing it as unnecessary that the Anathemas be lifted, or that the Orthodox accept Dioscorus and Severus as saints, or that the Monophysites acknowledge Pope Leo to be a saint. The restoration of communion, however, would bear with it the implication that the Anathemas on both sides would cease to be in effect (ibid., p. 6).

At yet another conference in Addis Abbaba, the un-Orthodox statements of representatives of the Orthodox Churches were buttressed by Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Rev. V. Borovoy, resulting in a resolution

that the mutual Anathemas simply be dropped. "Should there be a formal declaration or ceremony in which the Anathemas are lifted? Many of us felt that it is much simpler to drop these Anathemas in a quiet way as some Churches have begun to do" (ibid., p. 211).

Here again we see in practice the Protestant concept of ecclesiology whereby the excommunication of one for dogmatical error does not prevent heretics from belonging to the Church. Rev. Vitaly Borovoy clearly expresses this attitude in his paper "The Recognition of Saints and the Problem of Anathemas" presented at the conference at Addis Abbaba, clearly asserting that both Monophysites and Roman Catholics are full-fledged members of the Body of Christ. He claims that Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Monophysites have "one Holy Writ, one Apostolic Tradition and sacred origin, the same sacraments, and in essence, a single piety and a single way of salvation" (ibid., p. 246). With such attitudes, is it any surprise that compromise reigns supreme in the relationship between the Orthodox promoters of ecumenism and the Roman Catholics, Protestants and Anti-Chalcedonians?

Outdoing even Patriarch Athenagoras, Metropolitan Nikodim, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate gave communion to Roman Catholic clergymen in the Cathedral of St. Peter on December 14, 1970. He served the Divine Liturgy there, while in violation of Canons, a choir of the students of the Pontifical College sang and Latin clergymen accepted communion from his hands (Diakonia No. 1, 1971).

Yet, behind these practical manifestations of the so-called ecumenical movement, other broader aims are discernible which lead to the utter abolition of the Orthodox Church.

Both the World Council of Churches and the dialogues between various Christian confessions, and even with other religions (such as, for instance, Islam and Judaism) are links in a chain which in the manner of thinking of ecumenists must grow to include all of mankind. This tendency is already evident at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1967.

According to ecumenists, all this could be accomplished by a special Council, which in their eye would be truly "ecumenical" since they do not recognize the historical Ecumenical Councils as being truly so. The formula is given in the Roman Catholic ecumenical Journal *Irenicon*, and is as follows:

1. The accomplishment of gestures of reconciliation for which the lifting of the Anathemas of 1054 between Rome and Constantinople can serve as an example.
2. Communion in the Eucharist; in other words a positive solution to the problem of intercommunion.
3. Acceptance of a clear understanding that we all belong to a universal (Christian) entity which should give place to diversity.
4. That Council should be a token of the unity of men in Christ (*Irenicon*, No. 3, 1971, pp. 322-323).

The same article states that the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Union is working to achieve the same result as Cardinal Willibrands said at Evian. And the Assembly on Faith and Constitution has chosen as its main theme "The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind." According to a new definition, everything relates to ecumenism "which is connected with the renewal and reunion of the Church as a ferment of the growth of the Kingdom of God in the world of men who are seeking their unity" (*Service d'information*, No. 9, February, 1970, pp. 10-11). At the conference of the Central Committee in Addis Abbaba, Metropolitan George Khodre made a report which actually tends to connect the Church in some way with all religions. He would see the inspiration of the Holy Spirit even in non-Christian religions so that, according to him, when we communicate of the Body of Christ we are united to all whom our Lord embraces in His love toward mankind (*Irenikon*, 1971, No. 2, pp. 191-202).

This is where the Orthodox Church is being drawn. Outwardly this movement is manifested by unending "dialogues"; Orthodox representatives are engaged in dialogues with Roman Catholics and Anglicans; they in turn are in dialogue with each other, with Lutherans, other Protestants, and even with Jews, Moslems and Buddhists.

Just recently, the Exarch of Patriarch Athenagoras in North and South America, Archbishop Iakovos, took part in a dialogue with Jews. He noted that as far as he knew, at no other time in history has such "a theological dialogue with Jews taken place under the sponsorship of the Greek Church." Besides matters of a national character, "the group also agreed to examine liturgy, with Greek Orthodox scholars undertaking to review their

liturgical texts in terms of improving references to Jews and Judaism where they are found to be negative or hostile" (Religious News Service, January 27, 1972, pp. 24-25). So it is that Patriarch Athenagoras and other ecumenists do not limit their plans for unia to Roman Catholics and Protestants; their plans are more ambitious.

We have already quoted the words of Patriarch Athenagoras that the Lord desires that "His Church be one, visible to the entire world so that the entire world would fit within Her." A Greek theologian and former Dean of the Theological Faculty in Athens writes in much the same vein. In evolving the ecumenical idea of the Church, his thought arrives at the same far-reaching conclusions. He asserts that the enemies of ecumenism are thwarting the will of God. According to him, God embraces all men in our planet as members of His one Church yesterday, today and tomorrow as the fullness of that Church (Bulletin Typos Bonne Presse, Athens, March-April 1971).

Although it is obvious to anyone with an elementary grasp of Orthodox Church doctrine that such a conception of the Church differs greatly from that of the Holy Fathers, we find it necessary to underscore the depth of the contradiction.

When and where did the Lord promise that the whole world could be united in the Church? Such an expectation is nothing more than a chiliastic hope with no foundation in the Holy Gospels. All men are called unto salvation; but by no means do all of them respond. Christ spoke of Christians as those given Him from the world (John 17:6). He did not pray for the whole world but for those men given Him from the World. And the apostle St. John teaches that the Church and the world are in opposition to each other, and he exhorts the Christians, saying, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 1:16). Concerning the sons of the Church, the Savior said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). In the persons of the Apostles the Savior warned the Church that in the world She would have tribulation (John 16:33), explaining to His Disciples: "If you were from the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). In Holy Scriptures, therefore, we see that a clear distinction is made between the sons of the Church and the rest of mankind. Addressing himself to the faithful in Christ and distinguishing them from unbelievers, St. Peter writes, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people" (I Peter 2:9).

We are in no manner assured in Scripture of the triumph of truth on earth before the end of the world. There is no promise that the world will be transfigured into a church uniting all of mankind as fervent ecumenists believe, but rather there is the warning that religion will be lacking in the last days and Christians will suffer great sorrow and hatred on the part of all nations for the sake of our Savior's Name (Matt. 24:9-12). While all of mankind sinned in the first Adam, in the second Adam—Christ—only that part of humanity is united in Him which is "born again" (John 3:3 and 7). And although in the material world God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 4:45), He does not accept the unjust into His Kingdom. Rather, He addresses them with these menacing words: "Not everyone who saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Doubtlessly our Savior is addressing the heretics when He says: "Many who say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And them I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22-23).

So it is that our Lord tells the heretics, "I never knew you"; yet Patriarch Athenagoras tries to convince us that "they were not separated from the communion in the mystery of the God-man Jesus and His Divine-human Church." It is the belief in the renewal of the whole of mankind within the new and universal church that lends to ecumenism the nature of a chiliastic heresy, which becomes more and more evident in the ecumenistic attempts to unite everyone, disregarding truth and error, and in their tendency to create not only a new church, but a new world. The propagators of this heresy do not wish to believe that the earth and all that is on it shall burn, the heavens shall pass away, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (II Peter 3:1-12). They forget that it is after this that a new Heaven and a new Earth on which truth will abide will come to be through the creative word of God—not the efforts of human organizations. Therefore the efforts of Orthodox Christians should not be directed to the building of organizations, but toward becoming inhabitants of the new Creation after the Final Judgment through living a pious life in the one true Church. In the meantime, activities aimed at building the Kingdom of God on earth through a fraudulent union of various confessions without regard for the Truth, which is kept only within the Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church, will only lead us away from the Kingdom of God and into the kingdom of the Antichrist.

It must be understood that the circumstance which prompted our Savior to wonder if at His Second Coming He would find the Faith yet upon the earth is brought about not only by the direct propagation of atheism, but also by the spread of ecumenism.

The history of the Church witnesses that Christianity was not spread by compromises and dialogues between Christians and unbelievers, but through witnessing the truth and rejecting every lie and every error. It might be noted that generally no religion has ever been spread by those who doubted its full truth. The new, all-encompassing "church" which is being erected by the ecumenists is of the nature of that Church of Laodicea exposed in the Book of Revelation: she is lukewarm, neither hot nor cold toward the Truth, and it is to this new "church" that the words addressed by the Angel to the Laodicean Church of old might now be applied: "So that because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16). Therefore because they have not received "the love that they might be saved," instead of a religious revival this "church" exhibits that of which the Apostle warned: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2:10-12).

It is, therefore, upon the grounds stated above that the Most Reverend Members of our Council of Bishops unanimously agreed to recognize ecumenism as a dangerous heresy. Having observed its spread, they asked us to share our observation with our Brother Bishops throughout the world.

We ask them first of all to pray that the Lord spare His Holy Church the storm which would be caused by this new heresy, opening the spiritual eyes of all unto understanding of truth in the face of error.

May our Lord help each of us to preserve the Truth in the purity in which it was entrusted to us undefiled, and to nurture our flocks in its fidelity and piety.

+ Metropolitan PHILARET

[_|Back to main article|](#)

| [Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Publications](#) | [Articles](#) |